

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

v.

DANIEL J. HAYS,

21-CR-6099 FPG

Defendant.

**PLEA AGREEMENT**

The defendant, DANIEL J. HAYS, and the United States Attorney for the Western District of New York (hereinafter "the government") hereby enter into a plea agreement with the terms and conditions as set out below.

**I. THE PLEA AND POSSIBLE SENTENCE**

1. The defendant agrees to waive indictment and plead guilty to a one-count Information charging a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252A(a)(2)(A) (attempted receipt of child pornography), for which the mandatory minimum term of imprisonment is 5 years and the maximum possible sentence is a term of imprisonment of 20 years, a fine of \$250,000, a \$100 special assessment, and a term of supervised release of at least 5 years and up to life. The defendant understands that the penalties set forth in this paragraph are the maximum penalties that can be imposed by the Court at sentencing.

2. The defendant understands that the Court must impose an assessment of not more than \$35,000 for the offense of conviction pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 2259A(a)(2), in addition to any other criminal penalty, restitution, or special assessment. The defendant further understands that, unless the defendant is indigent, the



Court must impose a special assessment of \$5,000 for the offense of conviction pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 3014.

3. The defendant understands that, if it is determined that the defendant has violated any of the terms or conditions of supervised release, the defendant may be required to serve in prison all or part of the term of supervised release, up to 2 years, without credit for time previously served on supervised release. If the defendant commits any criminal offense under Chapter 109A, 110 or 117, or Sections 1201 or 1591 of Title 18, United States Code, for which imprisonment for a term longer than 1 year can be imposed, the defendant shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and up to life. As a consequence, in the event the defendant is sentenced to the maximum term of incarceration, a prison term imposed for a violation of supervised release may result in the defendant serving a sentence of imprisonment longer than the statutory maximum set forth in ¶ 1 of this agreement.

4. The defendant has been advised and understands that under the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, the defendant must register and keep registration current in all of the following jurisdictions: where the defendant resides; where the defendant is employed; and where the defendant is a student. The defendant understands the requirements for registration include providing the defendant's name, residence address, and the names and addresses of any places where the defendant is or will be an employee or student, among other information. The defendant further understands that the requirement to keep the registration current includes informing at least one jurisdiction in which the defendant resides, is an employee, or is a student, not later than three (3) business days after, any change of the defendant's name, residence, employment, or student status. The defendant has been advised and understands that failure to comply with these obligations subjects the defendant to

prosecution for failure to register under federal law, Title 18, United States Code, Section 2250, which is punishable by imprisonment, a fine, or both.

## **II. ELEMENTS AND FACTUAL BASIS**

5. The defendant understands the nature of the offense set forth in Paragraph 1 of this agreement and understands that if this case proceeded to trial, the government would be required to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the following elements of the crime:

- a. Using a means or facility of interstate or foreign commerce, the defendant attempted to receive an image of child pornography;
- b. The image of child pornography would have been shipped or transported in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce by any means, including by computer; and
- c. The defendant knew that what he attempted to receive would have constituted child pornography.

## **FACTUAL BASIS**

6. The defendant and the government agree to the following facts, which form the basis for the entry of the plea of guilty including relevant conduct:

- a. On April 27, 2021, an undercover law enforcement agent (the UC), commenced an investigation concerning individuals who use the social media application “Application A” in order to engage in child exploitation crimes. The UC created a profile on Application A in which he posed as an 11 year old female.
- b. Beginning on April 27 and continuing through May 11, 2021, while in the Western District of New York, the defendant communicated with the UC via Application A and text messaging. At the outset of the conversation, the UC told the defendant that the UC was an 11 year old female. The defendant acknowledged the child’s age but continued to communicate with the UC anyway.
- c. Believing that he was communicating with a minor, the defendant engaged in sexually explicit chats with the UC, in which the defendant discussed meeting the child for sex. The defendant also asked the child (UC) to

produce and send him sexually explicit photographs of herself. The images that the defendant asked the child (UC) to produce would have constituted child pornography as defined by 18 U.S.C. § 2256(8). By this conduct, the defendant knowingly attempted to receive child pornography.

- d. On May 11, 2021, the defendant traveled from his home in Bliss, NY to the child's supposed home in the Western District of New York, in order to meet the child for sex. Upon his arrival to the meeting place, the defendant was arrested and was found to be in possession of candy, which was intended for the child. The defendant also possessed an LG Tracfone, that he used to communicate with the UC on both Application A and via text messaging.
- e. The Tracfone was manufactured outside of New York State and outside of the United States, and therefore traveled in interstate and foreign commerce. Application A operates using the internet, which is a means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce.

### **III. SENTENCING GUIDELINES**

7. The defendant understands that the Court must consider but is not bound by the Sentencing Guidelines (Sentencing Reform Act of 1984).

#### **BASE OFFENSE LEVEL**

8. The government and the defendant agree that, pursuant to Guidelines § 2G2.2(c)(1), the offense of conviction involved causing, transporting, or permitting a minor to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct, and therefore, Guidelines § 2G2.1(a) applies to the offense of conviction and provides for a base offense level of 32.

#### **SPECIFIC OFFENSE CHARACTERISTICS** **U.S.S.G. CHAPTER 2 ADJUSTMENTS**

9. The government and the defendant agree that the following specific offense characteristics apply:

- a. the 4-level increase pursuant to Guidelines § 2G2.1(b)(1)(A) (the child had not attained the age of 12 years); and
- b. the 2-level increase pursuant to Guidelines § 2G2.1(b)(6)(B)(i) (the offense involved the use of a computer).

**ADJUSTED OFFENSE LEVEL**

10. Based on the foregoing, it is the understanding of the government and the defendant that the adjusted offense level for the offense of conviction is 38.

**ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

11. At sentencing, the government agrees not to oppose the recommendation that the Court apply the two (2) level downward adjustment of Guidelines §3E1.1(a) (acceptance of responsibility) and further agrees to move the Court to apply the additional one (1) level downward adjustment pursuant to Guidelines §3E1.1(b), which would result in a **total offense level of 35**.

**CRIMINAL HISTORY CATEGORY**

12. It is the understanding of the government and the defendant that the defendant's criminal history category is I. The defendant understands that if the defendant is sentenced for, or convicted of, any other charges prior to sentencing in this action the defendant's criminal history category may increase. The defendant understands that the defendant has no right to withdraw the plea of guilty based on the Court's determination of the defendant's criminal history category.

**GUIDELINES' APPLICATION, CALCULATIONS AND IMPACT**

13. It is the understanding of the government and the defendant that, with a **total offense level of 35 and criminal history category of I**, the defendant's sentencing range would be a **term of imprisonment of 168-210 months, a fine of \$40,000 to \$250,000, and a period of supervised release of 5 years and up to life**. Notwithstanding this, the defendant understands that at sentencing the defendant is subject to the maximum penalties set forth in Paragraph 1 of this agreement.

14. The government and the defendant agree to the correctness of the calculation of the Sentencing Guidelines range set forth above. The government and the defendant, however, reserve the right to recommend a sentence outside the Sentencing Guidelines range. This paragraph reserves the right to the government and the defendant to bring to the attention of the Court all information deemed relevant to a determination of the proper sentence in this action.

15. The defendant understands that the Court is not bound to accept any Sentencing Guidelines calculations set forth in this agreement and the defendant will not be entitled to withdraw the plea of guilty based on the sentence imposed by the Court.

**IV. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS**

16. In the event the defendant's plea of guilty is withdrawn, or conviction vacated, either pre- or post-sentence, by way of appeal, motion, post-conviction proceeding, collateral attack or otherwise, the defendant agrees that any charges dismissed pursuant to this agreement shall be automatically reinstated upon motion of the government and further agrees not to assert the statute of limitations as a defense to any federal criminal offense which

is not time barred as of the date of this agreement. This waiver shall be effective for a period of six months following the date upon which the withdrawal of the guilty plea or vacating of the conviction becomes final.

#### **V. GOVERNMENT RIGHTS AND RESERVATIONS**

17. The defendant understands that the government has reserved the right to:

- a. provide to the Probation Office and the Court all the information and evidence in its possession that the government deems relevant concerning the defendant's background, character and involvement in the offense charged, the circumstances surrounding the charge and the defendant's criminal history;
- b. respond at sentencing to any statements made by the defendant or on the defendant's behalf that are inconsistent with the information and evidence available to the government;
- c. advocate for a specific sentence consistent with the terms of this agreement including the amount of restitution and/or a fine and the method of payment;
- d. modify its position with respect to any sentencing recommendation or sentencing factor under the Guidelines including criminal history category, in the event that subsequent to this agreement the government receives previously unknown information, including conduct and statements by the defendant subsequent to this agreement, regarding the recommendation or factor; and
- e. oppose any application for a downward departure and/or sentence outside the Guidelines range made by the defendant.

18. The defendant agrees that any financial records and information provided by the defendant to the Probation Office, before or after sentencing, may be disclosed to the United States Attorney's Office for use in the collection of any unpaid financial obligation.

19. At sentencing, the government will move to dismiss the criminal complaint pending against the defendant under 21-MJ-4068.

## **VI. APPEAL RIGHTS**

20. The defendant understands that Title 18, United States Code, Section 3742 affords a defendant a limited right to appeal the sentence imposed. The defendant, however, knowingly waives the right to appeal and collaterally attack any component of a sentence imposed by the Court which falls within or is less than the sentencing range for imprisonment, a fine, and supervised release period which is set forth in Section III, ¶ 13, above, notwithstanding the manner in which the Court determines the sentence. In the event of an appeal of the defendant's sentence by the government, the defendant reserves the right to argue the correctness of the defendant's sentence.

21. The defendant understands that by agreeing to not collaterally attack the sentence, the defendant is waiving the right to challenge the sentence in the event that in the future the defendant becomes aware of previously unknown facts or a change in the law which the defendant believes would justify a decrease in the defendant's sentence.

22. The government waives its right to appeal any component of a sentence imposed by the Court which falls within or is greater than the sentencing range for imprisonment, a fine and supervised release period which is set forth in Section III, ¶ 13 above, notwithstanding the manner in which the Court determines the sentence. However, in the event of an appeal from the defendant's sentence by the defendant, the government reserves its right to argue the correctness of the defendant's sentence.

## **VII. FORFEITURE PROVISIONS**

23. As a result of his conviction for the offense alleged in Count 1 of the Information, the defendant agrees to criminally forfeit to the United States any property

which contains a visual depiction of child pornography, pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 2252(a)(1), and/or any and all property, real and personal, used, or intended to be used to commit or to promote the commission of such offense, all pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2253(a)(1) and (3), and all property traceable to such property, including but not limited to the following:

- a. One LG Tracfone, IMEI #: 355388094305182.

24. The defendant also agrees that the property listed above is properly forfeitable to the United States pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2253(a)(1) and (3). The defendant further agrees to fully assist the government in the forfeiture of the aforementioned property and to take whatever steps are necessary to pass clear title to the United States, including, but not limited to surrender of title and execution of any documents necessary to transfer the defendant's interest in any of the above property to the United States, as deemed necessary by the government.

25. After the acceptance of this plea of guilty, and pursuant to Rule 32.2(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the government will request a Preliminary Order of Forfeiture covering the items listed above. The defendant hereby waives any right to notice of such Preliminary Order of Forfeiture. The defendant further consents and agrees that the Order of Forfeiture shall become final as to the defendant prior to sentencing and agrees that it shall be made part of the defendant's sentence and included in the Judgment pursuant to Rule 32.2(b)(4) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

26. The defendant agrees to the entry of an Order of Forfeiture for the aforementioned property and waives the requirements of Rules 32.2 and 43(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure regarding notice of the forfeiture in the charging instrument,

announcement of the forfeiture at sentencing, and incorporation of the forfeiture in the judgment. Defendant acknowledges that he understands that the forfeiture of property is part of the sentence that may be imposed in this case and waives any failure by the court to advise him of this, pursuant to Rule 11(b)(1)(J) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, at the time his guilty plea is accepted.

27. The defendant agrees that forfeiture of the aforementioned property as set forth in this agreement shall not be deemed an alteration of the defendant's sentence. Forfeiture of the defendant's property shall not be treated as satisfaction of any fine, restitution, cost of imprisonment, or any other penalty the Court may impose upon the defendant in addition to forfeiture.

28. The defendant knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily waives his right to a jury trial on the forfeiture of the assets. The defendant knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily waives all constitutional, legal and equitable defenses to the forfeiture in any proceeding, including any jeopardy defense or claim of double jeopardy, whether constitutional or statutory, as to this criminal proceeding or any related civil or administrative proceeding. The defendant further agrees to waive any claim or defense under the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution, including any claim of excessive fine regarding the forfeiture of assets by the United States.

29. The defendant further waives any right to appeal or collaterally attack any matter in connection with the forfeiture of the items listed above as provided in this agreement.

**VIII. TOTAL AGREEMENT AND AFFIRMATIONS**

30. This plea agreement represents the total agreement between the defendant, DANIEL J. HAYS, and the government. There are no promises made by anyone other than those contained in this agreement. This agreement supersedes any other prior agreements, written or oral, entered into between the government and the defendant.

JAMES P. KENNEDY, JR.  
United States Attorney  
Western District of New York

BY:

  
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KYLE P. ROSSI  
Assistant United States Attorney

July 19, 2021

I have read this agreement, which consists of pages 1 through 11. I have had a full opportunity to discuss this agreement with my attorney, Steven Slawinski, Esq. I agree that it represents the total agreement reached between me and the government. No promises or representations have been made to me other than what is contained in this agreement. I understand all of the consequences of my plea of guilty. I fully agree with the contents of this agreement. I am signing this agreement voluntarily and of my own free will.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DANIEL J. HAYS

Defendant

Dated: July 19, 2021

  
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STEVEN SLAWINSKI, ESQ.

Attorney for the Defendant

Dated: July 19, 2021